

The EPA Big Hole River Sub-Area Emergency Response Project

Background

As the Nation's largest water, earth, biological science and civilian mapping agency, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) works in cooperation with more than 2,000 organizations across the country to provide reliable and impartial scientific information to resource managers, planners, and other customers. Information is gathered in every state by USGS scientists monitoring hydrological, biological, energy, and mineral resources. USGS monitoring serves to minimize the loss of life and property from natural disasters; to contribute to the sound conservation, economic and physical development of the nation's natural resources; and to enhance the quality of life.

As a manager of the Hazardous Substances Superfund, the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is required to designate and prepare emergency response action plans for sub-areas throughout the nation. These plans will assist local emergency offices that have a responsibility to respond to, and contain, oil spills before they become an environmental threat.

Big Hole River Area

The Oil Pollution Act (OPA) of 1990 required designations for sub-area contingency planning. Based upon risk and environmental concerns, the Big Hole River environ was selected as one such area. The Big Hole River Sub-Area, known for its pristine natural resources, encompasses four counties in southwestern Montana. At 20 miles across, about 50 miles long and 6,000 feet in elevation, the Big Hole River Sub-Area sprawls across a most beautiful setting, contains one of the best natural fisheries in the nation, and is the source for numerous community water supplies. The Big Hole River valley is also a major highway and railroad transportation route for hazardous materials. Without tools to plan for and respond to hazardous spills, this region will remain vulnerable, and its inhabitants will be unprotected from potential environmental disasters.

Application

The USGS, Rocky Mountain Mapping Center and the EPA's Region VIII Oil Response Program are working together to implement web-based information and decision support applications. Using ArcIMS, the Big Hole River emergency response action plan becomes a visual information tool accessible to numerous responders and managers. This application supports accurate and expedient emergency response with digital georeferenced information. Locations of fire stations, hospitals, public water sources, water access points, surface water intakes, oil storage facilities, and transportation routes are immediately accessible. Built-in Internet links provide real-time stream gaging and weather information.

Information

For information specific to the USGS Big Hole Emergency Response Application contact:

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USGS Mapping Liaisons
<http://mapping.usgs.gov/www/partners/crreps.html>.

For information on other USGS products and services, call 1-800-ASK-USGS, use the ASK.USGS fax service, which is available 24 hours a day at 703-648-4888, or visit the Rocky Mountain Mapping Center Web site at <http://rockyweb.cr.usgs.gov/>. Please visit the USGS home page at <http://www.usgs.gov/>.

